History of dairy cattle traced

(Continued from page 17)

were brought with the first vessel, the Susan Constant in 1607. The idea is supported by a statement from Don Pedro de Zuniga in a letter to the king of Spain, dated November 23, 1609, who reported that he had been told by an English fisherman "that the cattle which they sent increased very much." However, when Captain John Smith left the colony in October 1609, the inventory of animals did not include the mention of cows. Nor were cattle listed among the animals that went into the pot during the "Starving Time" of that winter, even though one historian was of the opinion that cattle had been brought over for breeding purposes were to be found at Jamestown at the time. But, if they were and were eaten, they certainly couldn't be credited with starting a dairy industry.

The discouraged settlers made plans to evacuate Jamestown. However, Sir Thomas Gates, Governor of the Colony received word that Lord De La Warr had arrived at Port Comfort on the way to Jamestown and was bringing 150 settlers and a generous supply. Learning of the new supply Gates hastened back to Jamestown. On June 10, 1610, De La Warr reached "James Citty" and made his landing. Fortunately, De La Warr had brought with him a supply of cattle, including "milch" cows.

Another indication that the dairy industry began in June of 1610 comes from a letter written by Sir Thomas Dale who arrived in May of 1611, the date normally said to be the time of arrival "...no corn sett, some few seeds put into a private garden or two, but the cattle, cows, goats, swine, poultry etc. to be well and carefully on all hands preserved and all in good plight and likeing."

Lord De La Warr, whom we are willing to credit with the first shipment of cows, fell sick after his arrival in June 1610 and after a long illness was forced to leave Jamestown in March of 1611. On June 25, 1611, he reported to the Council of Virginia in London, "The countrey is wonderful fertile and very rich, and makes good whatsoever heretofore hath beene reported of it, the Cattell already there, are much increased, and thrive exceedingly with the pasture of that Countrey. The kine all this last Winter, though the ground was covered most with snow, and the season sharpe, lived without other feeding than the grasse they found, with which they prospered well, and many of them readie to fall with Calve; Milke being a great nourishment and refreshing to our people, serving also in (occassion) as well for physicke as for Food, so that it is no way to be doubted, but when it shall please God that Sir Thomas Dale, and Sir Thomas Gates, shall arrive in Virginia with their extraordinary supply of one hundred Kine, and two hundred Swine, besides store of all manner of other provisions, for the sustenance of the Collony, there will appeare that successe in the Action as shall give no man cause to distrust that hath already adventured, but encourage every good minde to further so worthy a worke, as well redound both to the Glory of God, to the Credit of our Nation, and to the comfort of all those that have beene Instruments in the futhering of it." This was the first historic mention of milk in Virginia.

RICHARD HARRIS (left) and his son, R.M., move a hay baler outside the storage shed to work on the piece of equipment. The Harrises use a great deal of alfalfa in their dairy operation, producing about 12,000 bales a year for their cows. Richard, Sr., remembers his first check for milk, back in the 1940s. "It was for $33," he recalls.

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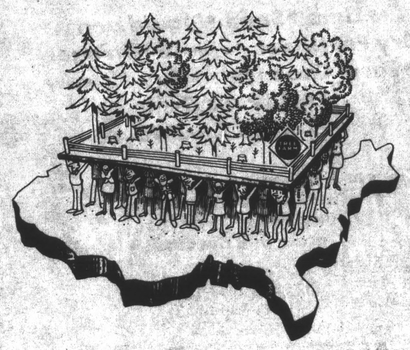

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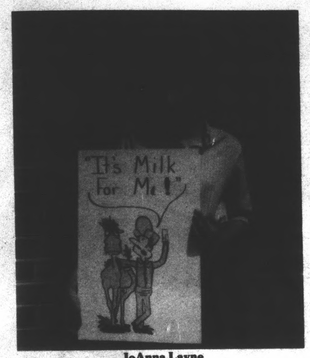
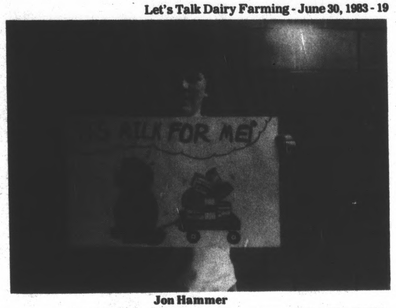


JoAnna Layne

4-H Dairy poster winners cited here

Shown here are the two first place winning posters in the 4-H "June is Dairy Month" poster program. Jon Hammer, son of Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Covington, was the first place winner in the 9-11 age group and JoAnna Layne, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ted W. Layne, was the first place winner in the 12-14 age group. Jon and JoAnna's posters were judged on the State level during the week of June 20-24.

The June is Dairy Month Poster Contest is sponsored by the American Dairy Association. The 1983 theme was "It's Milk For Me."



Jon Hammer

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